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NASIS

NEBRASKA ANNUAL SOCIAL INDICATORS SURVEY

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SURROGATE MOTHERING

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The Nebraska Annual Social Indicators Survey

David R. Johnson and Alan Booth, 1987 Study Co-Directors

The findings in this report are based on data collected in the Twelfth Nebraska Annual Social Indicators Survey (NASIS). This survey is part of an on-going study of the quality of life in Nebraska conducted by the Bureau of Sociological Research at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

In the Fall of 1987, a representative sample of 1882 Nebraskans eighteen years of age or older living in households was interviewed by telephone. The respondents were selected using a random digit telephone sampling design. The interview averaged approximately 30 minutes and included questions about work, recreation, attitudes towards public services, taxes, and political and social issues. Other items included in the survey measured the quality of life in the state. For the entire sample, 95 out of 100 times the percentages computed from the items asked on the survey are likely to be accurate to within plus or minus 2.3 percent of the figure that would have been obtained if each adult in Nebraska had been surveyed. This is an estimate of maximum error and for most items the percentages are likely to be even more accurate.

The data gathered by NASIS are used by a wide variety of state and local government agencies for policy and program planning and by faculty and students at the University of Nebraska and other colleges for research and training. No information identifying any respondent is released to any users and the strict confidentiality of individual respondents is rigidly enforced. While the final responsibility for the organisation and structure of the survey and for reports produced rests with the Bureau of Sociological Research, public agencies and university departments play an integral part in planning the survey through an Advisory Committee. Public organisations interested in membership on the Advisory Committee should contact the NASIS Study Directors.

Funding for NASIS comes from the University of Nebraska, the Bureau of Sociological Research, and state and local agencies which buy items and data analysis from the survey.

The NASIS surveys are repeated each year to measure change in the quality of life in Nebraska. While there is a core of questions which is included every year, each survey has a large component of unique items which address specific topical areas. Additional details on the NASIS surveys or questions regarding the use of the survey data or cost of purchasing items on future surveys can be obtained by contacting Alan Booth or David R. Johnson, NASIS Study Directors, at the Bureau of Sociological Research or by sending for a copy of the 1988 NASIS Prospectus.

SURROGATE MOTHERING OPPOSED BY MAJORITY OF NEBRASKANS

When couples are unable to have children of their own, some couples chose to adopt. Others remain childless. With modern technology a number of other options have become available, including surrogate mothering. Couples contract with a woman to bear them a child using the husband's sperm. In return for a fee, the woman gives up rights to the child. Surrogate mothering has become an option for those who are intent on having a child who is biologically related to themselves.

Several controversies have arisen over surrogate parenting. Some believe that the intrusion of technology on a natural function is morally wrong. Feminists believe that since most of the women who bear children on contract are of modest means, surrogate mothering is exploiting disadvantaged women. In a few cases (less than 1% according to one authority) surrogate mothers decide to keep the child and court battles emerge over custody.

To deal with this issue, the Nebraska legislature just passed a bill (LB674) which declares that surrogate parenting contracts are void and unenforceable. This means that, when a surrogate mother decides to keep the child, the court won't intervene to enforce the original contract. However, no legislation is on the books or proposed that makes surrogate mothering legal or illegal.

A question on surrogate mothering was including in the 198' Nebraska Social Indicators Survey. During the months of October and November a representative sample of people were asked: "In some states, couples who want children but are unable to have them hav

contracted with another women to bear them a child. Typically the husband's sperm is donated. In return for a fee, the woman turns the child over to the parents and gives up all rights to the child. Would you favor or oppose laws that would make this legal in Nebraska?"

As the data in Table 1 show, a majority oppose enabling legislation. Thirty-two percent favor such legislation, 61% oppose it and 7% are undecided on the matter.

Table 1. Percent Who Favor or Oppose Legalizing Surrogate Parenting

	Percent	Number in Category
Favor	32	149
Oppose	61	283
Uncertain	7	35
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Total	100	466

Men and women did not differ in their views, nor did voters and non-voters, or the major religious denominations. On the other hand young persons, parents and urban residents favored enabling legislation more than older individuals, non-parents and small town and rural residents.

As the data in Table 2 show, half of those in their childbearing years (under 35 years of age) favored enabling legislation

Table 2. Percent who Favor or Oppose Surrogate Parenting by Age

	Age				
	18-24	25-34	35-49	50-64	65+
Favor	49	53	35%	22%	11%
Oppose	51	47	65	78	89
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	100	100	100	100	100

It is clear that generation plays a very important role in peoples' views about surrogate mothering. Younger persons who grew up with the technology and who themselves may be unable to have a child or know someone in such circumstances appear more sympathetic to the idea. Even in the younger generations, however, more than one half have doubts about the practice.

Parents with dependent children in the home are less likely to oppose surrogate mothering (60%) than non-parents (70%). Those in communities with a population of 10,000 or more are less opposed (57%) than people in rural areas (75%). The parental status and rural-urban differences largely reflect the generational differences. Parents are younger as are urban residents.

While the law does not stand in the way of people who contract with surrogate mothers, neither will it deal with breaches of surrogate mother contracts. Public opinion does not favor enabling legislation at this time. As more generations become familiar with surrogate parenting, the data would suggest that the practice will become more widely accepted.

List of reports already released using data gathered in the 1987 Nebraska Annual Social Indicators Survey. These may be purchased at the indicated price from the Bureau of Sociological Research at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

Report Number	Title
1	1987 NASIS Methodology Report: Study Design, Instruments, and Forms. David R. Johnson. Price: $7.50.
2	Majority Favor Higher Salaries For Legislators. Alan Booth. Price: $ .50.
3	Majority Favor Alternatives to Death Penalty. Alan Booth. Price: $1.00.
4	Support Concept of Living Wills. Alan Booth. Price: $ .50.
5	Solid Waste Disposal Site Regulation. Alan Booth. Price: $ .50.